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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a method of organizing Business English studies for students who learn it as a foreign language at schools of business and universities outside English-speaking countries. These students typically lack both previous practical experience in business and opportunities to watch business being done in English or to participate themselves in real-life business communication in English. That puts additional obstacles in the way of language acquisition. The suggested method is based on creating a quasi-natural business environment in the classroom where students acquire Business English through continuous simulation. A pilot study indicates that this approach may improve on existing methods. Four appendixes present the following: examples of tasks used in the course of Business English for organizing continuous simulation in the classroom; examples of project tasks used in the course; samples of materials for listening and reading tasks; and a questionnaire for students' evaluation of the coursebook and methods used. (Contains 18 references.) (Author/SM)

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# Acquiring Business English in a Quasi-Natural Business Environment: A Method of Teaching Business English to Students of Business and Economics

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# Acquiring Business English in a Quasi-Natural Business Environment: A Method of Teaching Business English to Students of Business and Economics

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This article discusses a method of organizing Business English studies for students who learn it as a foreign language at schools of business and universities outside English-speaking countries. Those students typically lack both previous practical experience in business and opportunities to watch business being done in English or to participate themselves in real-life business communication in English. That puts additional obstacles in the way of language acquisition. The suggested method is based on creating a quasi-natural business environment in the classroom where students acquire Business English by modeling the process of doing business in English through continuous simulation. A pilot study indicates that this approach may improve on existing methods.

## Introduction

The purpose of the study reported in this article was to develop a method (and a coursebook corresponding to that method) most suitable and effective for teaching students of Business English in a typical Post-Communist Eastern European country. The students of tertiary-level schools of economics and business were chosen as the target – those students who are already at the intermediate level of their command of General English, but know neither Business English (BE) nor the practical workings of business, which they have just started studying as their major. A new approach to teaching such students is necessitated by the lack of effectiveness in out-of-date methods (and coursebooks) developed in the former USSR. This cannot be remedied by simply adopting the methods (and coursebooks) for BE studies existing in the West since they are not adapted to specific local conditions and needs.

The solution to this problem is an urgent requirement because, for economic and political reasons, BE teaching/learning is rapidly becoming one of the most popular branches of EFL teaching/learning in the Post-Communist countries of Eastern Europe, such as the Ukraine. But this

teaching/learning is different from teaching and learning BE in, for instance, most of the developed countries of Europe. One of the principal differences lies in the fact that in the countries of the former USSR, BE is rarely learned by people who already work in business, know their jobs, and only lack the knowledge of English for professional purposes. In Ukraine, such people mostly rely on translators and interpreters when they are in need of making oral or written contacts requiring the command of BE. (A similar situation may characterize some other countries.)

The body of BE learners in Ukraine consists almost exclusively of students from business schools, colleges, and universities majoring in business and economics who lack more than the knowledge of Business English at the start of their studies. Their ideas of business as a whole are also rather vague, with little or no practical experience in that area. This is further complicated by the fact that Business English is being learned in a non-English-speaking country, where nobody uses English outside the classroom and where the students are deprived of opportunities of watching business being done in English. Having never seen it in reality, most teachers and students have only vague ideas about business communication in English. So in teaching practice that can be observed in Ukrainian tertiary schools, classes of BE mostly focus on language forms used in business communication but not on communication proper. That focus is supported by the existing tradition and BE coursebooks published in the former USSR. As a result, both the students and the teachers concentrate their efforts almost solely on conscious learning with explicit explanations and training in grammar and vocabulary. According to Krashen (1982), this cannot lead to developing communication skills successfully, since they are mostly acquired unconsciously in the process of taking in rich and varied comprehensible input (and, it should be added, in the process of communication in the target language itself).

The existing BE coursebooks support the "conscious learning" approach, as has already been mentioned, and those that are published in the countries of the former USSR are rather obsolete and seem inadequate in view of up-to-date pedagogical approaches. The inadequacies show up in their language, the suggested ways and methods of teaching and learning, the contents, the design, and the structure. That is why both the teachers and the students often, and justifiably, voice their dissatisfaction with them, preferring BE coursebooks published in the West. But Western BE books do not really solve the problem. First, they are not easily accessible in Ukraine and are often too expensive. Second, they don't take into account the local conditions and students' background knowledge. Third, they also support either explicitly or implicitly the conscious learning approach, focusing students' attention not so much on the ways of doing business in English as on the language used for it. Fourth, their design and structure offers nothing that can help the Ukrainian students from business schools and universities feel the practicality of doing business in

English. Authentic materials that are included in those coursebooks are not helpful in that respect. They are psychologically authentic to people already working in business and knowing it, and it is actually for them that the coursebooks under discussion are mostly designed. But they cannot be perceived as such by students who know next to nothing about business and economics - nothing practical at least, just the theory that they were taught in their studies.

It is hardly possible to fill with life the process of doing business in English for students without putting them in a situation of doing it in that language. If that happens, it can replace or, at least, supplement consciously learning BE grammar and vocabulary with unconscious acquisition of communication skills in real-life communication. Doing business in English cannot be achieved in reality in the conditions under consideration, but an attempt can be made to model this process in the classroom. Such an approach requires a specific method of teaching and learning Business English. The following part of the article is devoted to the discussion of the basic characteristics of that method. It should be noted in advance that the method, the practical teaching, and teaching materials developed were elaborated exclusively for students who have already reached the intermediate level in their command of General English since that level was considered to be the required foundation for starting any course of Business English.

## Business English Through Continuous Creative Communication (BET 3C): The Basic Characteristics of the Method

To achieve the ends of making the process of doing business in English relevant and life-like to learners, a number of recent (and not so recent) innovations in BE teaching were incorporated into the method being developed. For instance, the teaching materials were oriented so that students could mostly learn Business English via communication that imitates or models genuine business communication (Ellis & Johnson 1994). Learning was task-based, and learning assignments were mostly different tasks from the area of business that students solved using English as a tool (Prabhu 1987). Learning was content-based, so that everything that was learned about Business English was learned through the content matter from the areas of business, marketing, etc. (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche 1989). It was also theme-based, with activities and information focused on a number of themes that in their entirety covered the selected content-matter (Brintonet al.). Finally, authentic case studies were a regular feature and an integral part of the learning process.

All of the above mentioned features are inherent to quite a number of American and British state-of-the-art BE coursebooks. Yet, as has already

been said, in the Ukraine and for the students under discussion, such coursebooks do not solve the problem of replacing mastering BE through conscious learning of language forms with unconsciously acquiring it in the process of business communication while doing business in English. To ensure that students get practice doing business in English, the BE classroom must offer a quasi-natural business environment. To create such an environment, several specific components of the method were developed that, in their combination, characterize it as something quite distinct from other methods of teaching and learning Business English. The method itself, as a unity of all its characteristics, was called BET 3C – Business English Through Continuous Creative Communication.

Among the six characteristics comprising the method, the driving principle is continuous simulation, which is the foundation for creating the required quasi-natural business environment in which students can acquire Business English, instead of consciously learning it. But the other five characteristics are in no way dispensable since they make a considerable contribution to the creation of that environment and facilitate students' activities in it with the goal of facilitating BE acquisition. The six characteristics are:

1. Continuous simulation (as the driving principle)
2. Project work
3. Learners' autonomy
4. Introduction of fictitious setting
5. Cooperative or team work
6. Integrated-skills approach

*Continuous Simulation*

Continuous simulation is, as has already been mentioned, the most important conceptual characteristic, with all the other characteristics supporting it. Continuous simulation is a specific organization of the Business English course whereby learning develops during continuous modeling and enacting of business activities and communication in class. The enactment is done in the framework of the functioning of an imaginary firm or company. Students themselves invent it, "set it up", organize its "functioning", and "work" in that firm or company. It is a kind of play where learners themselves are actors, directors, and playwrights on an on-going basis. Continuous simulation, unlike traditional simulations which are disconnected episodes in the learning process, creates a common meaningful plot for BE learning and communicative activities in the course, from class to class. Students decide what form of business they will organize and what the structure and management hierarchy of their firm will be; they organize the firm, elect or appoint its top executives, and find, interview, and select employees; determine the place that their business can occupy in the economy of the country; and they do market-

ing research, solve financial problems, participate in fairs, sign contracts, etc.

This common plot developing from class to class creates an imaginary life continuum in which students do not need to focus on conscious learning. They get the opportunity to acquire both Business English and business itself by constantly playing it in conditions imitating or modeling the business environment. What is very important is the fact that in continuous simulation, the modeled business environment is created by students themselves, who develop the plot when they play business. That makes students' communication highly creative and imaginative. Learners' creativity and imagination is what the entire approach is based on.

Continuous simulation as a tool in Business English teaching were first presented at IATEFL 1998 Manchester conference (Tarnopolsky 2000). But then they were just an additional activity superimposed on a more traditional Business English course. In the concept of BE studies discussed in this article, continuous simulation has become the leading organizing principle of the whole course. In Appendix A several tasks for students are given exemplifying the use of continuous simulation in that course. The examples are taken from the coursebook *Business Projects* (Tarnopolsky, Kozhushko, Bezugla, Degtiariova, & Gibson 2002), which was designed following the BET 3C method (the coursebook itself will be discussed later.)

*Project work*

The use of project work (Fried-Booth 1996) naturally follows the use of continuous simulation and the BET 3C approach in general. This is because project tasks are the most natural and the most creativity-oriented means of making students prepare for playing episodes in continuous simulation. For example, if an episode is connected with reporting the results of market research, playing the episode should be preceded by project work. The project task requires students to collect material for their report and write its abstract with the main points before doing the actual presentation. Such writing is done on the basis of learners' discussions in pairs or small groups that are also parts of continuous simulation. In this way, written project tasks not only prepare students for the following episodes but form links between episodes themselves becoming an integral part of continuous simulation.

They also summarize all the continuous simulation activities because after "founding" their firm at the start of the course, the students immediately get the assignment of writing the firm's prospectus - an assignment which they will continue to work on until the end of the course. At the end of every unit, learners write one section of that prospectus in which all the work done in the unit is summarized. For instance, on finishing Unit 2 (Company Structure), the students write the section of the

prospectus where the structure of their firm and its management hierarchy are described. After Unit 5 (Domestic and World Economy), they write a section discussing their firm's place in the economy of the country, and so on from unit to unit. That makes the results of written project tasks the visible material products of everything done in the course. Thus the entire work in the course finds its full expression in the final product - the prospectus of learners' imaginary firm written and prepared for publishing by themselves. Writing and preparing for publishing (typing, formatting, finding or creating illustrative materials for the prospectus, etc.) are very important for the success of continuous simulation. They are one of the principal means of making that simulation seem "real-life" because real material products of the firm's functioning are demonstrated.

The project work is also the leading means of developing students' writing skills in the course. Learners do their written project tasks in the framework of the process-oriented approach (Tribble 1996; White & Arndt 1991; Zamel 1982) since there are both pre-writing and post-writing discussions of what is going to be or has been written, and those discussions serve as a basis for drafting and redrafting the written texts. Besides, since written project tasks cover various and numerous themes related to business activities, different genres (Swales 1990) of business writing are also covered. As a result, the skills developed are somewhat different from those ordinarily set as the goals of teaching writing for business purposes in courses of Business English. They are not so much the skills of writing some standard business documents as the skills of writing creatively on business issues. Developing such skills seems to be more important than teaching students to write several types of standard business letters and other standard business papers. If creative writing skills are developed, developing skills of writing standard business documents may become a comparatively simple task.

What has been said about the use of project work can be summarized, first, by remarking that, thanks to it, writing in the suggested course of Business English becomes as creative and continuous as speaking in continuous simulation. Second, this writing may be considered the focal point of continuous simulation. This is because everything done by the students to get ready for continuous simulation or to demonstrate its results is gathered in students' project work writings. Thus, project work done in writing reflects all the other communicative activities in the course. Speaking has just being mentioned, but this concerns reading and listening as well. They are also done as creative activities because learners read or listen to some information for use in their continuous simulation, i.e., for transforming it creatively in their speaking. But since everything that the students say during continuous simulation is reflected and transformed in their own writing in the process of project work, the information obtained from reading and listening in English passes through no

less than two creative transformations - in the learners' own speaking and in their writing.

Examples of project tasks used in the Business English course can be found in Appendix B. They are again taken from the previously mentioned coursebook *Business Project*, which is the practical embodiment of the suggested BET 3C method.

*Learners' Autonomy*

Learners' autonomy (Benson & Voller 1997) is the result of introducing continuous simulation and project work. They would become impossible as creative activities (see the description above) if learners were not autonomous in what they do and say and how they do and say it. But students are autonomous when doing the continuous simulation and/or project tasks, and all the assignments in the developed course are designed to ensure that autonomy. Students discuss different points stating their own opinions and using their background knowledge, they read texts and listen to talks and conversations to find information that they lack for their own discussions and conversations on certain topics, and they write about the results of their discussions to state their own ideas in writing. Thus, they autonomously decide what to do and say and how to do and say it - learning while doing and saying it. The task for the teacher is not so much to teach as to organize learning and facilitate it. It does not mean that in the actual instruction process teacher-dependent and teacher-fronted learning activities are excluded, but they become a kind of starting point, stimulating and initiating further activities in which learners are autonomous or even fully independent. The importance of ensuring learners' autonomy lies in the fact that there is no other way of developing the skills and abilities students require to become truly independent users of Business English.

*Introduction of Fictitious Setting*

This supplementary feature of the method is needed to ensure the proper functioning of its three principal tools: continuous simulation, project work, and learners' autonomy. The introduction of fictitious setting means connecting the contents of a lot of materials used in the course (texts, dialogues, case studies, etc.) to an imaginary fictitious country where imaginary fictitious businesses operate. It also means setting learning activities in that fictitious country - for instance, when students found their imaginary firm there.

This feature seems essential enough. To become autonomous in continuous simulation and project work, learners have to feel the psychological freedom to use their imagination and fantasy. This is hardly possible if they are confined by the economic reality in their own country or any

other. They may be limited even by not knowing something of that reality since they will be afraid or at least embarrassed to invent. But establishing one's own business and operating it in a fictitious setting - an imaginary country with imaginary businesses in it - creates a degree of psychological freedom otherwise unattainable. Acting in some fictitious space, students will not feel the need to keep to strict facts of life and economy, and they will not be afraid of speaking or writing about something not fully known to them. This creates an opportunity to use imagination much more broadly and effectively than when the subject of communication is a real country with its real economy, businesses, etc. The result is creating an environment where students will freely and independently (autonomously) play business while doing continuous simulation and project work. It is a free play ground where learners may feel themselves at home because they set its rules and laws. This creates good conditions for enhancement of positive motivation and forming highly positive, anxiety-free attitudes to everything done in the classroom.

*Cooperative Learning*

This characteristic serves the same purpose as the previous one - ensuring the proper functioning of continuous simulation, project work, as well as making learners' autonomy possible. The great demands made by continuous simulation and project work, enhanced by the necessity of doing them autonomously, require learners' mutual help. So the focus in the course is on cooperative learning (Kessler 1992) instead of on traditional individual learning. Almost all the principal activities are designed to be done in pairs or small groups. This concerns project work, continuous simulation, all kinds of discussions and brainstorming, etc. When doing such learning tasks, students are required to pool their efforts. Such pooling is aimed at increasing learning in comparison with the assignments done individually - students not only learn themselves but teach each other and learn from each other. In the method under discussion, cooperative learning is fundamental to its organization and is the basis of learning activities, not only in but outside of class.

Cooperative learning also ensures ample practice in using language. If the greater part of activities are done in pairs or small groups, and not as teacher-fronted ones, it means that all students are actively practicing most of the class time. This is impossible in teacher-fronted activities since not more than one student can be genuinely active at any given moment of time - the one directly involved with the teacher (answering the teacher's questions or making a presentation, etc.).

*Integrated-Skills Approach*

The use of project work as one of the basic characteristics underlying the method under discussion leads to the emergence of one more feature. It has already been said that students' speaking in continuous simulation depends on their preparatory project work done in written project assignments which, in turn, depend on discussions, brainstorming, etc. The material both for speaking and writing is taken from what students listen to and read. This interconnectedness and interdependence in developing the four basic communication skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing) means those four skills are developed not separately from each other but in unison, so that reading and listening support speaking and writing, while speaking and writing reinforce the language material to be used for further development of reading and listening skills. This is the integrated-skills approach (Oxford 2001), and its systematic implementation as one of the conceptual features of the method is the last distinctive characteristic.

The six characteristics of the method make students' learning quite concrete. Thanks to them, learning Business English happens while students play business in English by way of doing continuous simulation and project work. Playing is mostly done autonomously by students in teams, i.e., in pairs or small groups, for which the efforts of all the members of a team are pooled to reach a common goal. That goal is attained by using different ways of communicating in English (speaking, listening, reading, writing) as interconnected instruments for playing business. Finally, students play business in the fictitious imaginary setting created by themselves. This allows them to use fantasy and imagination quite freely, enhances motivation, and stimulates anxiety-free attitudes. It was believed that the suggested approach used in its entirety could create a quasi-natural business environment which replaced learning of grammar and vocabulary with unconscious acquisition of communication skills and was fun for students. And when working on a foreign language is fun, the work is often successful. But the assumption had to be verified in teaching practice.

Such verification required, first of all, writing a new kind of coursebook of Business English designed in strict accordance with the method developed and its conceptual characteristics. Without such a coursebook, there was no hope for a teacher to use the method as it was meant to be used because of its peculiarities unusual for the standard BE teaching practice (at any rate, in the Ukraine.)

## Design and Structure of a BE Coursebook

The coursebook, by Tarnopolsky et al., titled *Business Projects* was published in 2002. It consists of the Student's Book with the Workbook (for

doing homework assignments) included in it, so that each unit of the Student's Book is followed by a corresponding unit of the Workbook. The set also includes the Teacher's Book, with detailed explanations and instructions for the teacher, and a 90-minute class cassette with the audio materials for the course. The title of the coursebook *Business Projects* was chosen because, as has already been said, project work is the focal point of learners' activities in the course.

The Student's Book is divided into 12 theme-based units, each unit devoted to one theme of business communication, i.e., one area of content in the field of business activities. Every two units are united by a more general theme, which creates a broader section of the coursebook consisting of two units. The themes of units and more general section themes are traditional for coursebooks of Business English. They were selected to cover the most important content matter of business communication. They include:

I. Starting a Business
  Unit 1. Forms of Businesses
  Unit 2. Company Structure
II. Job Hunting
  Unit 3. Making Appointments and Applying for a Job
  Unit 4. Career Profiles. Job Interviews
III. Business Environment
  Unit 5. Domestic and World Economy
  Unit 6. Business Objectives, Strategies, and Competition
IV. Marketing and Production
  Unit 7. Marketing
  Unit 8. Production
V. Banking and Finance
  Unit 9. Banking
  Unit 10. Finance
VI. Fairs, Exhibitions, Contracts
  Unit 11. Participation in Fairs and Exhibitions
  Unit 12. Contracts

Every unit consists of a Lead-in and three or four Steps. Lead-ins are designed to introduce students to the themes of units, to encourage them to understand, guess, and learn as much as possible about the content matter involved in any particular theme before reading special texts devoted to it. So, the activities are mostly directed at (a) eliciting students' background knowledge, (b) making them guess some information and give reasons why real facts should be as they have guessed them, (c) listening to some particular information that permits making conclusions as to more general information behind it, (d) getting students familiarized with the key vocabulary used in the unit, and (e) making students speak as freely and as much as possible on the theme from the point of view of their guesses and anticipation. Some Lead-ins also make learners

write on the basis of their guesses and anticipation, this writing being done in the process of project work. Thus, speaking, listening, and (in some cases) writing are the principal forms of communication in Lead-ins, while reading is used mainly for understanding instructions and assignments. In some Lead-ins, short texts for reading are included which serve to achieve the purposes mentioned above. The activities in Lead-ins embrace different discussions, brainstorming, role-plays, and even continuous simulation activities.

Steps 1, 2, and (in some units) 3 are the central parts of every unit. They are devoted to developing the theme and communication skills required to speak, read, listen, and write using its content matter. A text on some aspect of the theme is the focal point of each of those steps. Reading the text in class is preceded by some problem-solving discussions or brainstorming assignments for students to guess and anticipate its content matter and understand its key vocabulary.

After-reading assignments begin with comprehension check-up activities (answering questions, discussing particular points, summarizing, etc.). Just as in Lead-ins, problem-solving activities, for which students have to generate new information on the basis of information learned from the text, are the principal ones and take a considerable part of class work. One or several listening assignments are also frequently included into such steps. Such assignments are always followed by speaking and/or writing assignments. Role-plays are characteristic of speaking assignments and are usually done in pairs while discussion/brainstorming-type assignments may be done as whole-class, small group, or pair activities only. Reading and listening assignments are done individually, while all the others are done as a team (cooperative learning).

All these activities lead to and prepare students for continuous simulation and project work, which are the most important parts of every step. Continuous simulation is done as a pair, small group, or whole-class activity, and in almost every class one or several continuous simulation episodes are played. Project tasks are mostly out-of-class activities. But before actually doing them out of class, students first discuss and brainstorm them in class. Later, when a particular project task has been done, they present the results to their group-mates in class again followed by a whole-class discussion of those results.

There are two specific activities included into two steps of every unit. One of them contains a Business News section. In this section students listen to business news and do assignments that check understanding and develop speaking skills on the basis of listening. The second specific activity is a case study. It starts with reading (or listening to) an open-ended short text. Several questions accompany the text; to answer them, students have to do one or several problem-solving tasks using their background knowledge or the knowledge obtained from what they have done in that particular unit. The assignments are of a discussion/brain-

storming type and are usually done in small groups or pairs.

The Final Step (3 or 4) in every unit is probably the most important one. It summarizes the work in the unit and contains the most creative activities. As a rule, final steps contain no more than two types of activities: continuous simulation and project work. The project work is mostly discussions of the results of project tasks done out of class. For instance, if the project task was to develop the logo of students' imaginary firm, the logos developed by different teams would be presented to the whole class. Those logos are discussed and evaluated with the aim of choosing the best one.

Continuous simulation makes up the greater part of the Final Step in a unit. It may be organized as different meetings for discussing and making decisions on some issues. It can be, for example, the 'Board meeting' of the students' imaginary firm held to discuss the sales results in the current year and sales targets for the coming year. It can be a meeting devoted to listening to and discussing the report of the "Vice-President for Marketing" on the latest promotion campaign, etc. Continuous simulation in every final step is linked to project work. For instance, the above mentioned discussion of the company's logo would be organized as a meeting of the Marketing Department. In a greater part of the course continuous simulation involves presentations done by students, and those presentations are followed by discussions. Presentations themselves are the result of project work which, in turn, was done on the basis of previous discussions in the preceding episodes of continuous simulation.

The description of the coursebook given above illustrates characteristics of the method such as the use of continuous simulation, project work, and the integrated-skills approach. The other three characteristics are also fully embodied in the coursebook. First of all there is learners' autonomy. Both the nature of tasks and assignments (see above) and the recommendations given to the teacher in the Teacher's Book ensure autonomy. They also ensure cooperative learning because almost all those tasks and assignments are designed to be done in pairs or small groups. Finally, the coursebook introduces fictitious settings because a lot of materials in it (e.g., printed and audio texts) are connected to an imaginary, fictitious country called Bacardia with its imaginary, fictitious economy and businesses. In organizing the continuous simulation and project work at the very start of using the coursebook, the teacher is also instructed to encourage her or his students to locate the firm they are setting up in an imaginary country - for instance, in Bacardia.

One of the most characteristic features of the coursebook (and the course that can be organized on its basis) is that it is not explicitly focused on language forms; it is focused on content and using the content matter in communication, and it is in such communication that the language itself (BE) is acquired.

Since the coursebook is the practical embodiment of the method dis-

cussed in this article, the required verification of the method's practical effectiveness in a pilot study meant trying out the coursebook in teaching practice.

## Testing the Coursebook in Teaching Practice

The objective of the pilot study of the coursebook was to find out whether it really worked better than the existing BE coursebooks published in the countries of the former USSR. It was also important to know how it compared to typical Western coursebooks on Business English.

### *Organization of the Pilot Study and Selection of Students*

The study was organized in the 2001-2002 academic year with the second year students of the Department of Economics and Finance at Dnipropetrovsk University of Economics and Law. Classes of English there are held three times a week with two hours for every class. Three groups of students were involved. One group of 15 students, henceforth Group A, worked with the coursebook *Business Project* (Tarnopolsky et al. 2002) during the academic year. For a group of eight students, Group B, work during the same period was organized using a typical and methodologically up-to-date, Western coursebook of Business English - *Insights into Business* by Michael Lannon, Graham Tullis, and Tonya Trappe (1996). For Group C, again with eight students, a typical Russian coursebook *English for a Businessman* by O. I. Antonov (Informpechat 1991) was employed. It should be noted that the last coursebook mentioned was the most traditional and even obsolete in its concept, design, and structure, with the greatest attention paid to learning activities focused on language forms and the least concentration on purely communicative activities. This approach is quite characteristic of the BE coursebooks published in the countries of the former USSR.

The three groups were taught by three different teachers of equally high qualifications, each painstakingly following all the requirements of the method embodied in the coursebook that they were using. No changes or deviations from what was recommended in the coursebooks and teacher's books were allowed.

One of the reasons for choosing the two coursebooks for groups B and C, which were to be compared with group A, was the fact that their content matter and language material was similar to those of the *Business Projects* coursebook. Since all the three coursebooks were worked on during exactly the same period (one academic year, six hours of classes per week), the teaching/learning process was consistent in all the three groups: similar themes of units, similar content matter and language material to be learned, the same time of study. Students were approximately the same age (18-20 years of age with nobody younger or older.)

A similar male/female ratio in different groups was maintained as well: 9 females, 6 males in group A, 5 females, 3 males in group B, and 5 females, 3 males in group C (60% females, 40% males in group A, 62.5% females, 37.5% males in groups B and C). Finally, students in three groups had similar initial levels (intermediate) in their command of General English. This level was determined using a pre-test of their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

In the pre-test, the same testing procedure and criteria were used as for testing during and after the course of studies (see the detailed description below.) The principal difference was in the themes of what the students were reading about, listening to, speaking, and writing about (General English, not Business English). For instance, they were asked to speak about their hobbies and interests, write about their future life plans, read a text about environment protection, and listen to a short interview with a British actress.

The mean pre-test scores for every group (in percentage of correct test task completion) are given in Table 1. It can be seen from the table that the mean test scores for all the groups were very close. This suggests that the students (as separate groups) were at a similar initial level in their command of General English. Before entering the university, all the students learned English at their secondary schools only, within the framework of a standard (Ukrainian) secondary school program of English studies, in a six-year course. They knew no other foreign languages, though all of them were bilingual (Ukrainian and Russian).

Therefore, since the pre-test scores, language backgrounds, age and gender ratios were consistent among the three groups, the groups could be considered equal for the practical purposes of a small pilot study. It therefore seemed reasonable to ascribe differences in learning outcomes to the different coursebooks.

*Organization of Testing Procedure*

Testing was divided into three stages. Every stage covered the work done in four consecutive units of the 12-unit *Business Projects* coursebook (one third of the course) and ended with a testing session in all three groups. The progress in the development of students' speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills was tested during every testing session. The division into three stages with tests at the end of every stage permitted observation of the dynamics of that development. Since the tests at every stage were absolutely identical in all the groups, they could reveal the difference in skills development - those differences that depended on the coursebooks and methods used in different groups.

Before describing the testing materials and procedure, it should be said that we made every attempt to create tests which were not biased towards any group or the coursebook used in it. The coursebooks for

groups B and C, were specifically selected because they covered the same or similar themes and the same or similar language material as in group A. Therefore, the degree of test difficulty for students of different groups depended on the method embodied in each particular coursebook, not on its content matter.

**Table 1**
**Mean Test Scores**

| Mean Test Scores[a] | Speaking | Writing | Listening | Reading |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group A | 70.5% | 65.0% | 57.8% | 82.1% |
| Group B | 70.0% | 63.6% | 59.0% | 82.5% |
| Group C | 69.3% | 66.0% | 56.7% | 81.0% |

[a]In percentage of correct test task completion

In every testing session a speaking test was administered first. Every student had to talk to two independent assessors. He or she had to talk for several minutes (without any preparation) on one suggested topic and then to answer four questions. The topics were within the range of the themes and content matter studied by students of all the groups during each third of the course time after which the test was administered. For instance, the following topics for speaking were used in the first speaking test: If you were to organize your own business, what form of business would you choose and why? If you had to employ a top executive for your company, what personal qualities would you look for and why? What can you say about the management hierarchy in a typical company? If you are applying for a job in a big company, what papers should you submit? How would you try to interest your perspective employers when completing them? What questions should you get ready to answer during a job interview? What departments do most companies have and what are their functions? The questions that followed students' presentations were aimed at clarifying some points in them or could touch upon other topics.

Two independent assessors evaluated every student's speaking using the criterion approach (Cohen 1994). Seven criteria were employed: (a) relevance to the suggested topic and questions asked, content of what was said, (b) fluency, (c) comparative linguistic accuracy (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) (d) logical coherence and cohesion of what was said (e) variety of grammar and vocabulary used by the student when speaking, (f) volume of speaking (not less than 12 sentences

had to be pronounced in the presentation to score top points), and (g)correct aural comprehension of questions asked. A student could score up to 10 points according to every criterion so that the maximum score was 70.

The same criterion approach was used in the writing test. Students were given 30 minutes to write a 180-200-word essay on a suggested topic. For instance, the topic in the third and last, writing test was "What do you know about the types of banks and their different services?" The two independent assessors when reading every students' essay, evaluated it using the following criteria: (a) relevance to the suggested topic, content of what was written in the essay, (b) adequacy of the essay's format and style, (c) linguistic accuracy (grammar, syntax, vocabulary, spelling), (d) logical coherence and cohesion of what was written, (e) variety of grammar and vocabulary used by the student in her/his essay, and (f) volume (not less than 180 words for the student to score top points). A student could score up to 10 points according to every criterion so that the maximum score was 60. Both in the speaking test and in the writing test, the points given by each assessor according to every criterion were added up and divided by two. In this way the final score of every student for every test was calculated (Underhill 1987).

It should be mentioned that the same independent assessors graded all three groups with no replacements allowed because it would have immediately made the assessment results unreliable. Another point that should be mentioned is the fact that the assessors preferred to negotiate their grades between them before final grading, though they were in no way encouraged to do so. That is why their evaluations agreed to a point in most cases. The differences appeared only in disagreements, but those happened very rarely, and the difference practically never exceeded two points (There were only three cases of three points difference and one case of four points difference.)

In the three listening tests, students listened to three five-minute tape-recorded conversations on business matters. The tapescript of the conversation listened to in the first listening test is given as an example in Appendix C (see Sample 1).

After listening, learners had to answer ten comprehension questions in writing: The comprehension questions used in listening test 1 are also given in Appendix C as an example (see Sample 2). Every correct answer gained the student one point, so that the maximum possible score was 10 points.

Finally, in the reading tests the students were given ten minutes to read authentic original texts of about 800-1,000 words each from the area of business and economics. The text used in reading test 2 is given as an example in Appendix C (see Sample 3).

The text was taken away from the students after they finished reading, and they were requested to answer ten comprehension questions in writing. Examples of comprehension questions used in reading test 2 can be

found in Appendix C (see Sample 4). Just as in the listening tests, every correct answer gained the student one point, so that the maximum possible score was 10 points.

## Test Results and Discussion

*Test Results*

The results of testing after every stage are shown in Figure 1 (showing the means for every group).

The data in Figure 1 demonstrate that the students from group A performed much better in all the tests and during all three testing sessions than the students from the two other groups. Though this demonstration is the result of a limited pilot study, it gives sufficient grounds for some preliminary conclusions.

Better performance in testing suggests that the students from Group A manifested higher levels in their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. This suggests the advantages of the method introduced and the coursebook *Business Projects* over the more traditional methods and the two other coursebooks embodying them - at least, for the given students and in the given conditions of learning.

This conclusion particularly concerns the group with which a typical BE coursebook published in Russia was used because the results in that group (C) were so much poorer than in Group A (see Table 2). This suggests that the method employed is considerably more effective than the traditional method of teaching Business English which is based on focusing on learning language forms. But if the results of Groups A and B are compared, the comparison also demonstrates greater effectiveness of the method used in Group A. This signifies that the suggested method performed better in the classroom than even the up-to-date method used in a typical Western BE coursebook.

What was said above becomes especially visible when making the intra-group and inter-group comparisons of results from test to test, i.e., from lower to higher stages of learning. Those comparisons can show the dynamics of students' skills development in speaking, writing, listening, reading. The comparative data given in Figure 1 demonstrate that the gap in testing results between group A, on the one hand, and groups B and C, on the other hand, did not become narrower in the course of students' progressing from one stage of learning to another one. The students from groups B and C did not approach the level of group A.

It should also be noted that every following test was naturally more difficult than the preceding one. That was due to the increasing level of language and content difficulty of materials used in each test. That level almost doubled with every test in succession - in full accordance with the level of tasks and teaching materials used at the stage of learning pre-



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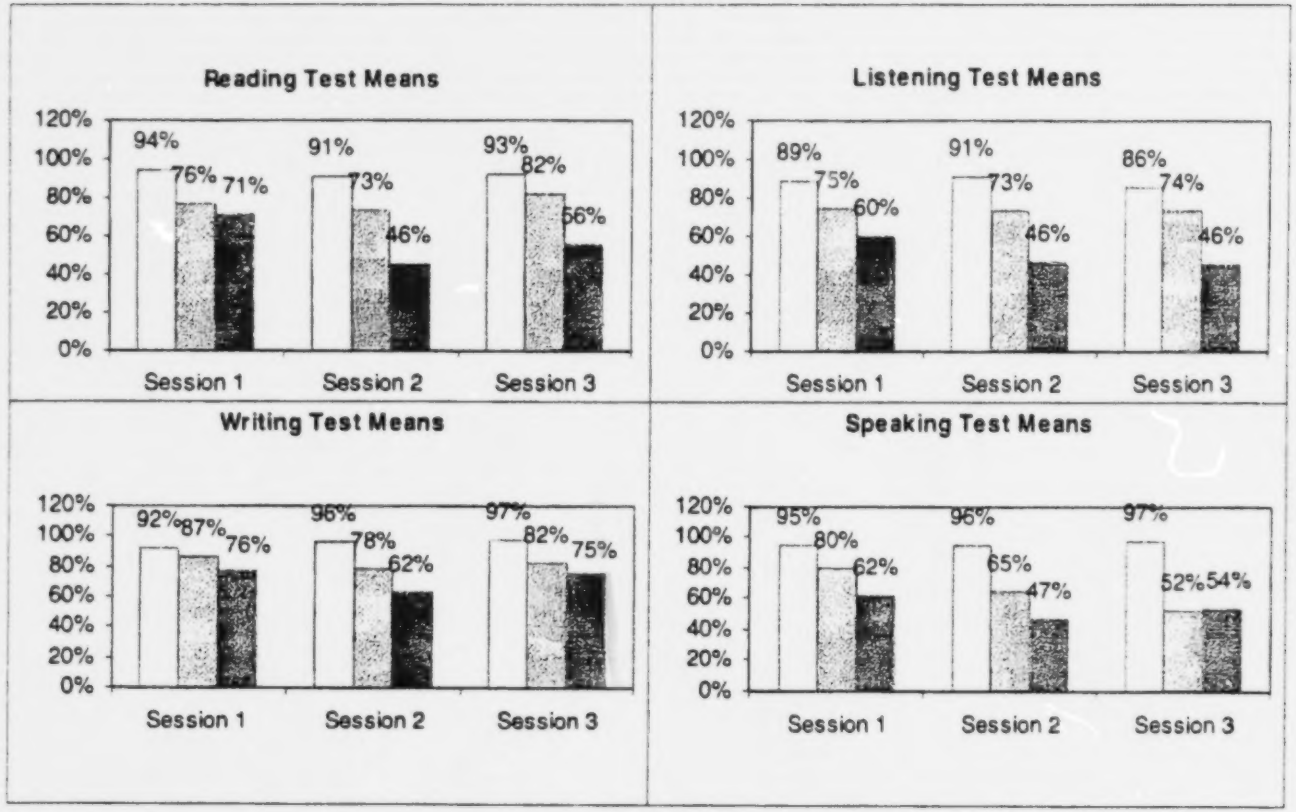
Figure 1.
Group Test Means




*White represents Group A, light gray Group B, and dark gray group C.

ceding a certain testing session. Test results in group A show that the students from that group were able to keep abreast of the increasing level of difficulty. Their test results remained stable and quite close to 100%. They even slightly improved and approached closer to 100% with the succession of tests. The only exceptions were test 2 in reading and test 3 in listening which showed slight decreases (see Fig. 1). This suggests that the development of communication skills in group A progressed steadily, never lagging behind that level of skills development which was the aim of a definite stage of learning. The pictures in groups B and C were quite different. The test results of those groups seemed to progress by fits and starts. After reaching a certain level in testing session 1, they dropped (in many cases quite low) for all the tests in testing session 2. Then they went up again in testing session 3, but not for all tests and never reaching the level of group A, nor the results of the same groups achieved in testing session 1 (see Fig. 1), which was the simplest of the three. The only exception was reading test 3 in group B which showed results slightly higher than the results of reading test 1 in the same group (see Fig. 1). It seems that the students from groups B and C, unlike group A, could not keep abreast of the increasing difficulty of tasks and teaching materials in the development of their skills in speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

Therefore, it can be said that the coursebook and the method of teaching used in group A seemed to ensure rapid development and improvement of students' communication skills permitting them to increase steadily in the level of language and content difficulty of learning tasks and teaching materials. The other two coursebooks and the methods underlying them did not seem to provide the means for achieving similar outcomes.

*Discussion of Test Results*

All the test results given above suggest that the method and the coursebook under discussion seem to be the most effective in comparison with the typical Western Business English coursebook occupying the second place, and the typical Russian coursebook being the least effective.

It has already been mentioned that the conclusions made above cannot be considered as final and completely generalizable because of the limited pilot character of the study. But the results of this study show a clear tendency of the all-around advantages of the suggested method and coursebook Business English.

*Students' Subjective Response*

Those advantages were also confirmed in a different aspect - the levels of students' satisfaction and motivation. Every student from every group was asked to complete a questionnaire anonymously after his or her final





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(third) testing session. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix D. The 13 questions in the questionnaires were all aimed at revealing whether the students were satisfied with different aspects of the coursebook used in their particular group during the academic year. The level of satisfaction with the coursebook naturally reflected the level of learners' satisfaction with the course organized on the basis of that coursebook and, consequently, with the method of teaching underlying both. That level of satisfaction was also a reflection of the level of motivation so that the higher level of satisfaction the students demonstrated, the higher their level of motivation was.

Satisfaction was defined as positive answers to the questions in the questionnaire by answers "yes" in questions 1, 4-9, 11-12, "better" in question 2, "fun" in question 3, "the best way" in question 10, and "just right" in question 13. All the other choices of answers were interpreted as dissatisfaction with a certain aspect.

It was decided that 12-13 positive answers out of 13 (92-100%) suggested a student's complete satisfaction; 9-11 positive answers (70-85%) were interpreted to mean that a particular student was almost satisfied with the coursebook; 6-8 positive answers (46-62%) were a sign of partial satisfaction and less than 6 positive answers (less than 40%) demonstrated dissatisfaction with the coursebook used.

The results of filling in the questionnaires by the students were as follows:

1. In group A, 13 students out of 15 (86%) demonstrated their complete satisfaction by giving 12-13 positive answers; one student (7%) was almost satisfied, and one (7%) was partially satisfied with the coursebook used. There were no dissatisfied students.
2. In group B one student out of eight (12.5%) was completely satisfied; one (12.5%) was partially satisfied, and six (75%) were dissatisfied with the coursebook used. There were no almost satisfied students.
3. In group C there were no students who were either completely satisfied or almost satisfied. Two out of eight (25%) were partially sat isfied, and six (75%) were dissatisfied.

Therefore, it was the students from group A only who showed the high level of satisfaction with the coursebook used in their group (*Business Projects*) and everything that it stood for - the course organized on its basis and the method that had been laid as the foundation of the coursebook and the course. They were capable of generating and maintaining the high level of students' positive learning motivation that the other two coursebooks seemed incapable of doing (This could also be observed by the teachers in the instruction process.)

*Limitations*

To finish the discussion, the already mentioned limitations of the pilot study described in this article should be listed – those limitations that constrain the generalizability of the results obtained and the conclusions drawn above concerning the effectiveness of the suggested method and coursebook. Such listing is required for pinpointing the direction of future studies.

The most important limitation is the fact that in the reported study, both the method and the coursebook were tried out in one single group in one educational institution and not in different institutions. The effectiveness of the methods in coursebooks used in this study should be tested with different groups of students in different schools in order to support our findings. Another limitation is the high qualifications of teachers who were teaching in all three groups. While the teachers in our study were equally highly-qualified, it would be important to test our method using teachers of varying qualifications. The third limitation is an insufficient number of collected students' opinions and impressions concerning the coursebook. Finally, one more limitation is the absence of properly collected and processed teachers' opinions. This suggests that the results and conclusions of this study have to be considered preliminary, and only in mass teaching, which is planned as the next step, will they be finalized and become conclusive.

## Conclusion

The method discussed in this article is based on six original characteristics that have been fully embodied in the coursebook *Business Projects*. These features have never before been used in such a combination in any other coursebook for Business English studies. They include (a) the use of continuous simulation as the principal learning activity that creates a quasi-natural business environment and makes learning fun for students; (b) the use of project work as the activity accompanying and reinforcing continuous simulation; (c) learners' autonomy; (d) the introduction of a fictitious setting that allows students to use their imagination freely, enhances learning motivation, and stimulates relaxed anxiety-free attitudes to learning; (e) organization of classroom activities on the basis of cooperative learning; and (f) the integrated-skills approach so that speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills are developed interdependently supporting and reinforcing each other.

The pilot study of the coursebook in question in comparison with one typical Western and one typical Russian Business English coursebook has suggested its advantages and higher effectiveness both in developing learners' communicative skills of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in English and in enhancing the students' positive learning motiva-


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tion and their satisfaction with how their learning was organized. It has also been found that using the coursebook *Business Projects* ensured the accelerated development of learners' Business English communication skills, permitting rapid increases in the level of language and content difficulty of learning tasks and teaching materials. The other two coursebooks showed the opposite results in that respect. This suggests the overall effectiveness of the method employed for the given conditions of learning Business English. Though such results and conclusions can be considered only as preliminary, they are still very hopeful and promising.

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## Appendix A

Examples of tasks used in the course of Business English for organizing continuous simulation in the classroom. The examples are taken from the coursebook *Business Projects* by Tarnopolsky et al. (2002).

1. Conduct a discussion with the whole class. Suppose that your class has decided to start a business. You cannot all be sole proprietors, because those of you who have money do not have managerial talents, specific skills, and so on. Those who have skills do not have money. So, you have to choose between a partnership and a corporation. Decide which you will have, and why. Then discuss what you will do, who will invest what, what the name of your partnership or corporation will be, whether it will be located in Ukraine or some other country. You can choose freely. Give reasons for all your decisions (Unit 1, p. 18-19).

2. (Pair work). In the last class (on Unit 1, class 5) your group founded your own business (a partnership or a corporation). In the last class on this unit you will hold a meeting to decide what job in the business each of you will do and what position everyone will hold. You need to do a lot of preparation for that meeting. Now you need to ask your partner a number of questions to find out:



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a. In which department or body of your company he or she would prefer to work, and why.
b. Which job he or she would prefer to do there, and why.
c. Which position he or she would prefer to occupy (a superior or a subordinate), and why.

You should try to get your partner to give reasons for every choice. Then change roles and let your partner find out the same information about you. Report your findings to the class (Unit 2, p 29).

3. In whole-group discussion discuss the results of interviewing students about their preferences for some definite job in your company or partnership (see activity Lead-in 8). Discuss what you have discovered about the types of intelligence that different students have (see activities IIId.2, 3). Each student should report his/her results and conclusions made when doing activities Lead-in 8 and IIId.2, 3. He or she should recommend which position in the company (or partnership) best suits his or her former partner, according to his/her type of intelligence and personal wishes. In each recommendation, include your reasons. All the recommendations should be discussed and alternative candidates may be nominated for every position. After discussing all the candidates for each position, elections are to be held. Elect the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Chief Executive Officer, and members of the Executive Board. Finally appointments are made by the Chief Executive Officer for the positions of directors, managers, heads of departments, etc. (Unit 2, p. 43-44).

4. Working in pairs, exchange with your partner the application letters and CVs that you wrote as Project Work in the preceding unit. Study your partner's application letter and CV very carefully. After you have finished, do job interviews. First you interview your partner, trying to decide whether he or she is suited to a certain position in your company (partnership). Then he or she should interview you with the same purpose (Unit 4, p. 78).

5. You will have a new Executive Board meeting now. Its aim is to listen to the presentations about your company (partnership's) position in Ukraine. After the second class on this unit you were to prepare presentations (as project work) stating your opinions on: a) how you see the place of your company (partnership) fitting into the economy of Ukraine, and b) how your company (partnership) can help in developing the economy of Ukraine

and in improving the economic situation as a whole. Each participant has about 2 minutes to make his or her presentation, and about 1 minute to answer possible questions (Unit 5, p. 98).

6. Work in the same small groups to develop a promotional campaign plan for a specific product or service in your company. Use the same product or service that you discussed when choosing target market and pricing. From your plan it should be clear which forms of promotion you will use for this specific product or service, and in what order. You will have to decide what forms of advertising will be used and why. Will these forms of advertising be used all at once, or one after the other? Why? (Unit 7, p. 126).

7. While working on Unit 7, you discussed how to promote some product(s) or service(s) of your company (partnership). If you selected a product, discuss in groups of three or four what materials and machinery you will need to manufacture it. What kind of instructions would you give to use this product? If you selected a service, discuss what product(s) your company (partnership) should manufacture, and what materials or machinery will be needed to produce it. Then list your instructions for using this product, and prepare appropriate recommendations to give your company (partnership) (Unit 8, p. 139).

8. Pair work. Student A in the pair is a representative of your company (partnership). Student B is a representative of a bank. A is talking to B about getting a loan for your company (partnership).

Before starting, A should decide and make notes about the following issues:
a) for what project of your company (partnership) the loan is requested;
b) what profits are expected and when;
c) what sum of money will be requested;
d) what the possible time of repayment is;
e) what interest rate your company (partnership) can afford to pay.

B should decide and make notes about the following issues:
a) what information will be requested from the applicant;
b) what estimates and documents the applicant will be requested to submit;
c) what conditions of the loan will be offered (Unit 9, p. 159).

## Appendix B

Examples of project tasks used in the course of Business English (taken from the coursebook *Business Projects* by Tarnopolsky et al. (2002).

1. The group is divided into 4 small groups (with 3 to 4 students per group). Two of the small groups have to write minutes of the meeting just held, including what issues were discussed, who spoke, and what decisions were taken. Two of the small groups should list characteristics of the company's (partnership's) top executives, to be included into the prospectus (Unit 2, p. 44).

2. Every applicant is required to write a letter of application for the job for which he or she is applying (following the results of the discussion above – see Ib. 4). Your application letters do not need to be truthful; use your imagination. Application letters should follow the format of the letter in the text that is used as a sample one. They may be started in class and finished as the home assignment for the next class. At the beginning of the next class, they should be handed in to the teacher for correcting and commenting (Unit 3, p. 55).

3. On the basis of what you have heard during the meeting, write an essay of 100-150 words giving your recommendations to your company (partnership) about trying to start a business in one of the four English-speaking countries. Give your reasons for choosing that country over the other. Specify what kind of cooperation may be possible (exports, imports, joint projects, etc.). List practical ways of starting the cooperation you envision. Your essay should be finished before the next class (Unit 5, p. 97).

4. (individual, pair-work, or small-group work – as the class decides). Design the logo of your company or partnership, and explain why you think that your logo would best represent it. You will have to design your logo before the last class on the next unit where all the suggested logos will be presented (Unit 7, p. 130).

5. Based on the discussion above (IIIa. 1 and 2) the next section of your company's (partnership's) prospectus should be written. This section describes production in the company (partnership) – the factory/factories and its/their structure, what goods are manufactured and how, how the Production Department functions, etc. The work should be done in small groups of 3 or 4 stu-

dents and completed before the last class of the next unit (Unit 8, p. 145).

6. In the next class you will simulate your company's (partnership's) participation in an international exhibition or fair, based on your decision when preparing a catalogue for it. You will need to make two slightly different presentations at the exhibition (fair). If your company (partnership) is engaged both in manufacturing some goods and in some type of public service, a separate presentation will be needed to focus on each of those aspects. If your company (partnership) is only involved in one of these, the two presentations should focus on different aspects of product/service.

   Now divide the class into two equal groups, each of which should brainstorm, prepare its presentation speech, and appoint a student to give it. All the graphs, charts, and schemes should also be prepared for the presentation. You should also decide: who the presenter's assistants will be to join him/her in answering questions; who the stand attendants will be to demonstrate particular products and services to visitors and answer their questions, etc. Prepare carefully for a good presentation because the reputation of your company (partnership) depends on it (Unit 11, p. 191).

7. During and after the preceding class you wrote contracts to sell some of your company's (partnership's) products. Exchange those contracts (pair A with pair B, and pair C with pair D, etc.). Each pair attentively reads and brainstorms the text of the contract written by the other pair, an then decides what improvements could be made in it. You should also identify the strong points of the contracts, and after class, write an essay concerning your suggestions (100 words). Prepare to use this essay as a basis for your presentation in the last class of this unit (Unit 12, p. 204).

## Appendix C

*Samples of Materials for Listening and Reading Tests*

*Sample 1*. Tapescript of the text for listening in listening test 1 (The source of the tape-recorded audio text was the class cassette that was a part of teaching materials developed by the first author. The materials were designed for the course of oral business communication Starting

Business Relations.)

A. Come in!

B. Good afternoon, gentlemen.

A. Oh, here you are! Sylvia, I would like you to meet Mr. Shevchuk. Mr. Shevchuk, that's Miss Sylvia Peters, our Public Relations manager.

B. Glad to meet you, Mr. Shevchuk.

C. How do you do. Nice to meet you.

A. How about a drink, guys? Something refreshing, eh?

B. It would be nice. Coca-Cola is just what I need.

C. And the same for me, please.

A. Well, here you are. And now I'm leaving you alone. I must be off. See you soon.

B. Well, Mr. Shevchuk, Jack has informed me about your problem. I'm ready to answer all your questions about the structure of our company.

C. Miss Peters, first of all I would like to know about the functions of departments which are under the Managing director.

B. I think that the functions of the Sales and Production departments are quite clear. As to the Human Resources department, it takes care of the personnel, its recruitment, and training. The Finance department is responsible for finance and accounting, and the Management Services department is in charge of rationalization throughout the company. Finally, the R&D department works on new products development. It works in close contact with the Regions. Each department has its own manager or director.

C. And what about the Regions?

B. Well, Regions, or regional departments, are under direct control of

the Managing Director, as you probably know. They report to him. But Regional Managers are supported by two Sections - Marketing and Technical Services. The Section Heads, or Leaders, are accountable to Regional Managers. They work with the Regions on the marketing and technical problems.

C. I see that the Managing Director is the key figure in the company. He is in charge of everything and everybody is accountable to him.

B. You are right in principle. But you must remember that a big company, such as ours, can have its subsidiaries abroad. For example, we have three subsidiaries: Rutland Canada, Rutland Australia and Rutland Greece. The subsidiaries report their activities to the Export Sales department of the parent company, i.e., to our offices here in London. The Export Sales department, in its turn, is accountable directly to the Board of Directors and not to the Managing Director. Well, that's a brief survey of the management of our company.

C. Thank you very much. You helped me a lot. I still have many questions, but don't want to take too much of your time. But can we meet again?

B. Yes, sure. It would be nice. Let me look into my diary. Will tomorrow at 10 a.m. do for you? I'll have a full hour to answer all your questions.

C. Wonderful. Thank you. I'll be on the spot at 10 sharp. Good-bye.

B. So long. See you tomorrow.

*Sample 2.* Comprehension questions for listening test 1.

(1)What departments are under the Managing Director? (2)What is the function of the Human Resources department? (3)What is the Management Services department in charge of? (4)What does the R&D department work on? (5)Who directly controls Regional departments?, (6)What two sections support Regional Managers?, (7)Who are Section Heads accountable to?, (8)Who is the key figure in a company?, (9)Whom do the subsidiaries report to?, (10)What body is the Export Sales department accountable to?

*Sample 3.* Text for reading in reading test 2 (retrieved from the Internet in a slightly adapted and abridged version: http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/Japan/Economy).

### Japan's Economics

Japans industrialized, free-market economy is the second-largest in the world after the United States. Its economy is highly efficient and competitive in areas linked to international trade, but productivity is far lower in areas such as agriculture, distribution, and services. After achieving one of the highest economic growth rates in the world from the 1960s through the 1980s, the Japanese economy slowed dramatically in the early 1990s, when the "bubble economy" collapsed. Its reservoir of industrial leadership and technicians, well-educated and industrious work force, high savings and investment rates, and intensive promotion of industrial development and foreign trade have produced a mature industrial economy. Japan has few natural resources, and trade helps it earn the foreign exchange needed to purchase raw materials for its economy.

While Japan's long-term economic prospects are considered good, Japan is currently in its worst recession since World War II. Plummeting stock and real estate prices marked the end of the "bubble economy" of the late 1980s. The impact of the Asian financial crisis also has been substantial. Real GDP in Japan grew at an average of roughly 1% yearly between 1991-98, compared to growth in the 1980s of about 4% per year. Growth in Japan in this decade has been slower than growth in other major industrial nations. The Government of Japan has forecast growth in Japan fiscal year 2001 at 1.7%. A number of economic indicators remain in negative territory, and growth for first quarter 2001 was 0.2%.

### Agriculture, Energy, and Minerals

Only 15% of Japan's land is suitable for cultivation. The agricultural economy is highly subsidized and protected. With per hectare crop yields among the highest in the world, Japan maintains an overall agricultural self-sufficiency rate of about 50% on fewer than 5.6 million cultivated hectares (14 million acres). Japan normally produces a slight surplus of rice but imports large quantities of wheat, sorghum, and soybeans, primarily from the United States. Japan is the largest market for U.S. agricultural exports.

Given its heavy dependence on imported energy, Japan has aimed to diversify its sources. Since the oil shocks of the 1970s, Japan has reduced dependence on petroleum as a source of energy from more than 75% in 1973 to about 57% at present. Other important energy sources are coal,

liquefied natural gas, nuclear power, and hydropower.

Deposits of gold, magnesium, and silver meet current industrial demands, but Japan is dependent on foreign sources for many of the minerals essential to modern industry. Iron ore, coke, copper, and bauxite must be imported, as must many forest products.

**Labor**

Japan's labor force consists of some 64 million workers, 40% of whom are women. Labor union membership is about 12 million. The unemployment rate is currently 4.9% - a post-war high. In 1989, the predominantly public sector union confederation, SOHYO (General Council of Trade Unions of Japan), merged with RENGO (Japanese Private Sector Trade Union Confederation) to form the Japanese Trade Union Confederation.

GDP: purchasing power parity - $2.95 trillion (1999 est.)
GDP - real growth rate: 0.3% (1999 est.)
GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - $23,400 (1999 est.)
GDP - composition by sector: agriculture: 2%, industry: 35%, services: 63% (1999 est.)
Population below poverty line: NA%
Household income or consumption by percentage share: lowest 10%: NA%, highest 10%: NA%
Inflation rate (consumer prices): -0.8% (1999 est.)
Labor force: 67,76 million (November 1999)
Labor force – by occupation: trade and services 65%, industry 30%, agriculture, forestry and fishing 5%
Unemployment rate: 4,7% (1999 est.)
Budget: revenues: $463 billion expenditures: $809, including capital expenditures (public works only) of about $94 billion
Industries: among world's largest and technologically advanced producers of motor vehicles, electronic equipment, machine tools, steel and nonferrous metals, ships, chemicals, textiles, processed foods
Industrial production growth rate: -0,1% (1999 est.)
Electricity – production: 995,982 billion kWh (1998)
Electricity – production by source: fossil fuel: 56.68%, hydro: 8.99%, nuclear: 31.93% other:2.4% (1998)
Electricity: consumption: 926,263 billion kWh (1998)
Electricity – exports: 0 kWh (1998)
Electricity – imports: 0 kWh (1998)
Agriculture – products: rice, sugar beets, vegetables, fruit, pork, poultry, dairy products, eggs, fish
Exports: $413 billion (f.o.b., 1999 est.)
Exports: commodities: motor vehicles, semiconductors, office machinery, chemicals

Exports: partners: US 31%, Taiwan 7%, China 5.5%, South Korea 5.4% Hong Kong 5.2% (1999)
Imports: $306 billion (c.i.f., 1999 est.)
Imports: commodities: fuels, foodstuffs, chemicals, textiles, office machinery
Imports: partners: US 22%, China 4%, South Korea 5.1%, Australia 4.2%, Taiwan 4.1% (1999)
Debt – external: $NA
Economic aid – donor: $9,1 billion (1999)
Currency: yen
Exchange rates: yen per US$1 – 105.16 (January 2000), 113.91 (1999), 130.91 (1998), 120.99 (1997), 108.78 (1996), 94.06 (1995)
Fiscal year: 1 April – 31 March

*Sample 4.* Comprehension questions for reading test 2.

1)What place does the economy of Japan occupy in the world?;
2)What can you say about the economic situation in Japan now?;
3)What is the situation in Japan's agriculture?;
4)What are the principal sources of energy used in Japan?;
5)What can you say about the labor resources of the country?;
6)What was Japan's budget in 2000/2001 fiscal year?;
7)What branches of industry are most developed in Japan?;
8)What does Japan export, and what countries were its principal export partners in 1999?;
9)What does Japan import, and what countries were its principal import partners in 1999?;
10)What are the dates of fiscal year in Japan?

## Appendix D

*Questionnaire For Students' Evaluation of the Coursebook and Methods Used*

Please help us to know your opinion of the coursebook that you have been using this academic year.

1. Do you like the coursebook that you have been using (circle yes or no)?

yes no

2. If you compare this coursebook with those that you have used before, is it better, worse, or just similar (circle better, worse, or just similar)?

better worse just similar

3. Do you think that assignments in the coursebook were fun or that they were boring (circle fun or boring)?

fun boring

4. Did you enjoy your classes of Business English when this coursebook was being used (circle yes or no)?

yes no

5. Do you believe that the assignments in the coursebook were creative and helped you demonstrate your creative potential, imagination, fantasy, inventiveness, your personality, and resources (circle yes or no)?

yes no

6. Do you believe that the assignments in the coursebook gave you as much autonomy (independence) for doing them as you would like to have (circle yes or no)?

yes no

7. Did you get sufficient help for doing such assignments (circle yes or no)?

yes no

8. Were the materials and assignments in the coursebook interesting, attractive, and useful for you personally (circle yes or no)?

yes no

9. Did the way of learning Business English suggested in the coursebook suit you personally (circle yes or no)?

yes no

10. Do you think it is the best, most efficient, and useful way of learning Business English or would you prefer something different (circle the best way or something different)?

the best way something different

11. Did you feel that your personal command of Business English was growing from class to class when you were using this coursebook (circle yes or no)?

yes no

12. Did the coursebook, the assignments in it, the course organised on the basis of this coursebook help you feel relaxed, anxiety-free, interested, and active in class (circle yes or no)?

yes no

13. Were the assignments in the coursebook too difficult for you, too easy for you, just right as to difficulty (circle too difficult, too easy, or just right)?

too difficult too easy just right

Thank you for your help!

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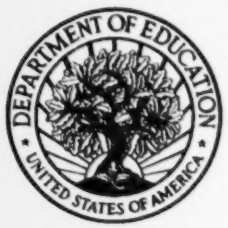


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